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Navy honors NAWCWD's Auborn for technical excellence

John Auborn, an electronics engineer at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division China Lake, center, receives the 2015 Department of the Navy Award for Technical Excellence at a Test and Evaluation Facility or Range from Rear Adm. Mat Winter, chief of naval research, and Carroll “Rick” Quade, DoN deputy for Test and Evaluation, at the Pentagon on April 20. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER WEAPONS DIVISION, CHINA LAKE, California - During an April 20 ceremony at the Pentagon, Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division electronics engineer John Auborn was honored with the 2015 Department of the Navy Award for Technical Excellence at a Test and Evaluation Facility or Range.

“It was unexpected,” Auborn said. “I just really enjoy working here, the people and the type of work that we do.”

A subject matter expert in Missile Systems Modeling and Simulation for both NAWCWD and the NAWC Aircraft Division, Auborn has been at China Lake for 29 years. He’s spent the last 20 supporting the Integrated Battlespace Arena, currently as the Mission Environments for Live, Virtual, and Constructive architect for the Surface and Strike Warfare Integrated Warfighting Capability team.

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"I coordinate a lot of activities that go into simulation," Auborn said. "I draw a lot of diagrams and schedules and design how things should look. Doing hands-on work is fun, but I can get more accomplished by helping other people do that. That's what I really enjoy."

Among Auborn's technical accomplishments, he's designed and developed the Unmanned Systems Facility and Virtual Prototype Facility used for manned aircraft and ground environment simulations. According to his nomination, Auborn took it upon himself to build the UxS and Virtual Prototype Facilities from the ground up and had running labs with 3-D terrain modeling tools, linking and integration with remote models, simulations and datalinks within six weeks.

Additionally, he is responsible for designing, integrating and adapting the Six Degrees of Freedom in flight models, sensor models, signal processing, network and guidance algorithms for weapons and aircraft on various distributed simulations. His UxS and Virtual Prototype Facilities as well as the 6-DOF applications are versatile in design and have been used in several exercises and simulations saving the DON significant amounts of money.

"Trying to do things right, cheaper and more efficiently is what drives me," Auborn said. "Although there are rules and processes that might make that difficult, you don't ignore them. Instead, you find the right way to use them and help people get through those problems."

The DON Award for Technical Excellence recognizes efforts at a test range or facility that have made significant advancements in T&E effectiveness and efficiencies through a technical innovation or solution.

Auborn's award comes after his receipt of the Dr. Manuel A. Garcia NAWCWD Honorary Award in 2015, becoming a Naval Air Systems Command Associate Fellow in 2011 as well as earning several Special Act NAVAIR Team Awards.

"In my line of work, there's no one person in charge," Auborn said. "You've got to talk to a lot of people to make things happen and, to me, that's very interesting and fun. I enjoy the challenge."